

TOWN OF ARLINGTON
TOWN MEETING ELECTRONIC VOTING STUDY COMMITTEE

September 11, 2013

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee was called to order by Committee Chair Eric Helmuth in the First Floor Meeting Room of the Town Hall Annex on Wednesday, September 11, 2013, at 7:35 PM.

Quorum

A quorum was present: Wes Beal, Roland Chaput, John Leone, Steve Storch, Adam Auster, and Eric Helmuth.

Elisabeth Patton arrived shortly after the start of the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION:
*Approval of
Minutes*

Mr. Beal moved to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2013, meeting.

The motion passed.

Business

MOTION
Meeting Times

Mr. Auster moved to set the time for regular Committee meetings to the third Wednesday evening of each month, starting next month.

The motion passed.

DISCUSSION
*Request for
Proposals*

Committee Chair Eric Helmuth distributed a revised draft of the RFP, a copy of which is appended to these minutes.

Mr. Storch, who collaborated on the draft with Mr. Helmuth, said he was inclined to include detailed requirements and other information, leading to a longer RFP.

Discussion repeatedly distinguished between the current project of procuring a service versus the potential future procurement of equipment.

Mr. Storch suggested that asking vendors for a promise of a credit towards purchase as part of the RFP would not be meaningful, since vendors would be able to adjust their purchase price to compensate for any discount.

Members suggested that experience should be an evaluation criterion rather than a requirement.

Members offered various observations and suggestions about the draft.

Mr. Helmuth said that the Town plans to issue the RFP this month, putting it on track to award the contract by the end of the year.

Others noted that this would give the Committee three months to prepare for Town Meeting.

DISCUSSION
Close Votes

Mr. Leone said that a special Town Meeting did not seem to be in the offing this fall.

He suggested that he and Mr. Auster should work together to draft a bylaw amendment that would define close votes as intended for all majority requirements.

MOTION:
Adjournment

Mr. Beal moved that the meeting adjourn.

The motion passed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

APPROVED
January 8, 2014

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

Eric Helmuth, *Chair*

Documents attached to these minutes:

1. “Electronic Voting Study Committee—Working Draft— 9/10/13: Town of Arlington/Massachusetts/Request for Proposals (RFP)”

TOWN OF ARLINGTON

MASSACHUSETTS

Request for Proposals (RFP)

The Town of Arlington, Massachusetts (the Town) acting through the Town Manager is requesting proposals from qualified firms for a one-time rental of an appropriate electronic voting system for use at its 2014 Representative Town Meeting commencing April 21, for use in as many sessions as the maximum budget of \$10,000 will permit.

Proposals are invited and will be received by the Purchasing Officer, Town of Arlington, Massachusetts on or before *[date and time TBD]* at the Town Manager's/Purchasing Office, Town Hall Annex 2nd floor, 730 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA 02476. Proposals delivered after the appointed time and date will not be considered.

The Town reserves the right to cancel any request for proposals, and to reject in whole or in part any and all proposals, when it is deemed in the best interests of the Town to do so.

Summary of deliverables

1. Rental of electronic voting system
2. Training and support
3. Vendor-supplied system operator

(A summary of response and submission instructions, other information, and edits to the above will be inserted by the Purchasing officer)

1. Introduction

In its Annual Town Meeting in the Spring of 2013 Arlington's Representative Town Meeting approved changes in Town bylaws to permit, but not require, the use of electronic systems to record, tally, display and archive the individual votes of Town Meeting Members. (See Appendix A, voting section of Town Bylaws.) This action followed an investigation and subsequent proposals by the Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee.

Town Meeting appropriated a maximum of \$10,000 for FY2014 for the purpose of renting an appropriate system for use at Annual Town Meeting 2014 that commences April 21, for as many sessions as the maximum budget will permit. Annual Town Meeting sessions are Monday and Wednesday evenings from 8 to 11 pm. and typically require 8 to 10 nights to complete the Warrant.

The intent of this appropriation, as expressed in the Finance Committee commentary on its motion that was voted by Town Meeting, is a trial of electronic voting for one Annual Town Meeting in as many sessions as possible, to see if Town Meeting wishes to adopt such a system for future regular use via a longer term rental, or purchase.

The Town is also interested in a credit toward the potential purchase of the rental system from the one-year rental contract, pending a positive reception of the trial by Town Meeting

2. Key dates for RFP response, and overview of the selection process

(This section will be drafted by the Town Manager's office)

3. Scope of Services

A. Project objective

The Town of Arrington, Massachusetts (“Town”), is seeking to acquire an electronic tally and display system (“System”)—also known as an audience-response system— that uses handheld devices to provide for voting at its about 252-member representative Town Meeting where each member is a potential voter. The System typically will operate in the Town Hall Auditorium at 740 Massachusetts Avenue; however, it may be used in other venues and for other purposes beyond to Town Meeting voting if the system is ultimately purchased.

The System will:

- **Provide a visual vote confirmation to each individual authorized voter** on any item or procedure that may be presented for an electronic vote at sessions of the 2014 Arlington Town Meeting;
- **Tally and display in-progress voting and voting results** to all Town Meeting attendees in varying customized formats and levels of granularity, and
- **Create a secure permanent electronic record** of the details of all such voting (such details to be recorded at the level of every vote taken by every specifically identified Town Meeting member).

B. Detailed requirements

The following subsections specify the required System components, services, and capabilities. Responding vendors will be evaluated on how well they meet these requirements; thus it is in the vendors’ interest to provide details clearly describing how their systems will address each of the required components, services, and capabilities.

Caveats regarding the detailed requirements:

- When some specified aspect of the System is seen to be desirable by the Town, but isn't deemed to be an essential requirement, the term "prefers" or "preferred" will be used below to indicate that to be the case. In cases where a vendor's system includes (potentially unique) capabilities that go beyond the basic requirements in a manner or manners that may be viewed as beneficial to the Town's intended System application (whether or not such capabilities are specifically indicated as "preferred"), the vendor is encouraged to include a description of those added capabilities in its response.
- If a respondent's proposed System does not support a given requirement not indicated as "preferred" (and thus is deemed essential,) the Town may nevertheless, at its sole discretion, consider accepting alternative functionality described by the respondent, provided the alternative is deemed by the Town to sufficiently fulfill the objective(s) for that requirement. In such cases, the responding vendor is encouraged to submit a question to the Town via the procedure described in Section 4 to ascertain the underlying objective(s) for the requirement in question. **(do we want to provide this caveat?)**

B.1 System Components and Services

Software to operate the System for developing/customizing and projecting displays, running a vote, recording and maintaining an archive of results, and producing reports. The System software shall run under Microsoft Windows and be fully-integrated into the Microsoft Office or compatible suite.

A computer to host the software, to be provided by the vendor or furnished by the Town.

1. The host computer will interface with the vendor-supplied radio receiver base unit(s) (see below) and must connect to a Town-provided projection system and local cable access television.
2. Vendors should specify whether they will provide the host computer and, in any case, shall identify the minimum specifications for that computer to ensure the proper operation of the proposed System. This should include hardware configuration details as well as specification of required System-compatible Microsoft Windows and Office versions, and any other required supporting application software.
3. Connection to the Town's digital projection system local will be via standard output connectors; VGA or BNC must be output for compatibility with cable access television.
4. Responding vendors should specify whether they will provide video signal switching equipment for selecting either the voting system or the hall presentation

computer for display at a given time; in either case, video signal switching should be downstream of the standard VGA or BNC output.

5. The System should not require Internet connectivity for its operation.

Radio receiver base unit(s) to support reliable, secure, and prompt receipt, storage, and display of votes from up to 252 handsets, and the delivery of confirming responses back to each of those handsets. The respondent shall stipulate for the proposed System the maximum end-to-end time it will take for the performance of that functional sequence for each voter (i.e., handset vote selection through handset feedback display), and also for the tabulation and display of results at the end of the Town-selected voting period.

Battery-powered handsets for 252 Town Meeting members, plus sufficient additional units to serve as spares. The Town prefers that handset batteries shall be non-rechargeable and of general-purpose type such as AA or AAA; however, the respondent may propose an alternative using custom or rechargeable batteries (along with supplied charging equipment). Vendors must specify the maximum number of simultaneous users (active handsets) that can be supported by their System.

Storage containers for all System hardware (e.g., handsets, base unit(s)). If the respondent proposes the use of rechargeable batteries, the storage containers shall also accommodate the recharging components, including wiring and charging stations.

System operation. The selected vendor will provide onsite staff to take primary responsibility for operation of the System during the covered Town Meeting sessions. Because of this is a sensitive initial deployment meant to provide a robust trial of electronic voting in Town Meeting, reliability and smooth operation is especially important. The Town believes this objective can best be met by a vendor-supplied administrator. While Town IT and other Town staff and appointed volunteers will be available to operate Town-provided systems and to handle administrative requirements (e.g., distributing and collecting handsets), it is expected that their operational knowledge of the electronic voting system will be limited; thus, the onsite vendor representative(s) will be instrumental to the successful operation of the system.

Responding vendors should describe the functions to be provided by their onsite staff in detail. Given the need to configure and verify operation of the System hardware and software components prior to each Town Meeting session, and to properly archive the session's voting data and inventory and secure equipment afterwards, it is expected that the onsite support will commence before the official start of each evening's meeting, and will continue for some time after adjournment. Vendors should provide their expectations for total time spent by their staff onsite (number of vendor staff, hours per Town Meeting session). Note that the typical duration of each Town Meeting session, from opening to adjournment is 3 hours.

Training. The use of the System as solicited in this RFP will be as a trial prior to the potential procurement of a long-term electronic voting system solution for Arlington's

future Town Meetings. Responding vendors should propose support for a training plan that is adequate for such a short-term trial, where primary System operation will be provided by the vendor (as specified above). The Town anticipates the need to train assigned IT and administrative staff/volunteers to the degree necessary to properly interface with and help administer the vendor System, and to introduce the Town Meeting members to the System and train them in its proper use during the voting process. Adequate training will be critical to a proper evaluation of the System by Town Meeting and, as such, the Town anticipates devoting its own resources to a training plan to be implemented before the 2014 Town Meeting sessions begin. Vendors should recommend, based on their prior experience, specifically how Arlington should implement the training for the trial system, and explain how they will support that effort.

B.2 System Capabilities

1. Voting shall be conducted via pre-assigned unique (at the “hardware level”) handsets that will be configured to be associated with, and then distributed to, each Town Meeting member. The handset shall support the user entry of one of three voting choices (Yes/No/Abstain), and shall include a display used to confirm the user’s votes. Such confirmation shall be of the user votes as actually received by the radio receiver base unit and registered in the System voting results database, i.e., confirmation must be based on feedback received by the handset from the base unit rather than simply being a local echo of user input. Vendors shall describe how this is accomplished.
2. The System shall allow, without limit, a voter to change his/her vote during the voting period for each matter, with only the final vote during the period being effective.
3. The handsets must operate reliably and securely within a 56’ X 66’ auditorium, without interfering with, or being interfered by, cellphone transmissions, 802.1x wireless transceivers, assisted-listening devices, wireless microphones, or other common wireless devices. Vendors should specify the maximum reliable range for the handsets, and should describe technical measures taken to protect the integrity of handset-to-base-station data communication, and to mitigate against interference from/to other wireless systems. Any potential interference interactions with other systems should be described. **(Lexington specifies a handset radio frequency of at least 2.4 GHz – not sure why this is..)**
4. The handsets shall include a low battery indicator. Battery life for the units must be at least 4 hours. Vendors should specify the expected battery life when the handsets are on and in “ready to vote” status.
5. If the handsets can support other non-essential System functions (e.g., requesting the attention of the Moderator), these should be specified.
6. It is critically important that the System will be able to provide reliable service during the covered Town Meeting sessions. Respondents should describe the

- measures that will be taken to ensure continued operation in the case of failure of handset, radio receiver base unit, or host computer hardware, including the expected quantities of spare unit provisioning. In the case of handset failure (or handset loss by the “owning” Town Meeting member), the vendor shall provide the detailed, step-by-step, process by which the old handset will be replaced by a properly-configured replacement unit that is then recognized by the System as being associated with the same member. The approximate elapsed time for such replacement should be specified. The System must lock out the previously recognized handset unless and until the System operator manually reactivates that handset for some future use by any voter.
7. All displays to be generated by the system must be legible from as far as 70 feet away when projected on a large screen with dimensions of approximately 8 feet x 8 feet.
 8. The System shall be capable of generation a customizable display (“Slide”) during voting of a 2-line (or more) description of the matter upon which the vote is being taken. Per-member votes of either Yes, No, or Abstain (or Abs), both in text and by a unique color, or blank to indicate a non-vote, shall be displayable via multiple Slides at the conclusion of the voting period. Members shall be identifiable by name and precinct number, with a customizable number of member results included per slide.
 9. The System shall further allow for suppression of the display of the individual member votes, such that only total Yes, No, Abstain tallies are shown, and shall be capable of displaying the required vote threshold applicable for passage of the matter to which a vote applies, and whether the matter has passed or failed based on that threshold.
 10. The System shall permit ad hoc selection of either displaying or suppressing the display of individual member votes prior to each vote.
 11. The System shall provide that any of the Slides (including any set of Slides to display the voting results and other matters involving display of all the Town Meeting member information) can be advanced on a customizable timed or on a manual basis.
 12. The System shall provide for Slides that can be prepared by the operator in advance for both the specific matters expected to come before a given Town Meeting session, as well as for more generic matters (e.g., quorum calls) with the latter being able to be reused during Town Meeting - but with the voting data for each use individually identified and retained. Notwithstanding this capability, the System must efficiently support voting on unanticipated matters first arising over the course of the meeting, or changes in the sequence of voting on expected items. Vendors should describe how such entirely new items or changes are supported.

13. The System shall provide the option of including in a Slide a customizable countdown clock that indicates the amount of time remaining during a customizable voting period. Real-time voting information (e.g., the instantaneous number of votes cast, without indicating the current Yes/No/Abstain tally) shall be displayable during the voting period. The Town prefers a provision for an indication (e.g., a change in color) during a customizable number of seconds near the end of the voting period. The Town would prefer that the voting count-down time also be included on the handset displays.
14. The respondent shall present suggested templates that are considered suitable for presentation of the types of Slides that have been mentioned herein on the aforementioned projection screen when viewed from the aforementioned maximum distance.
15. The System shall provide a secure permanent electronic record of all votes taken, within the operator's computer and available for export to an external device (e.g., a USB "thumb" drive). The record shall contain the Town Meeting members' precinct numbers, names, and their votes along with the description of each corresponding matter voted on and the date & time (to the nearest second) when the voting period for that matter ended. Vendors shall describe specifically how a session's results are stored.
16. Voting data shall be capable of easily being exported via standard non-proprietary formats such as Excel, PDF, Word, and CSV; vendors shall specify the formats supported by their System and shall describe options for generating reports of voting results.
17. The System database on the operator's computer for each Town Meeting session shall have a reversible "lock" that is set at the end of each session so that an explicit, additional, action is required to make that file editable. Correction of improperly recorded votes shall be allowed by the System, with such corrections noted in transaction/audit logs and on any generated reports.
18. In general, respondents shall describe security considerations employed in the System or recommended for the operator's computer to limit the ability to modify the voting records and to preserve previous results in the case of a failure of any component of the System.

C. Town of Arlington Responsibilities

1. Town staff will provide, maintain and operate the computer display system including a projector and screen which is also utilized for speaker presentations .
2. The Town will transmit the standard video output from the System to local cable access television and will operate the video switch between the voting system (operated by vendor-supplied personnel) and the main presentation computer (operated by town personnel).

3. The Town will, if necessary, provide staff or authorized volunteers to assist with the distribution and collection of voting handsets before and after each Town Meeting session.
4. The Town will supply electricity and a workstation for the voting administrator.
5. The Town will format the exported voting reports for website and hard copy publication; note, however, that the ease of transforming the System's native output into a form the Town deems suitable for public distribution is a comparative evaluation factor, per section 5(B) below.

4. Submission Requirements and Instructions

A. Proposal Elements

1. A narrative with appropriate supporting appendices that addresses the requirements and functions enumerated above. Specify any equipment or functions that would be the Town's responsibility not already enumerated above.
2. Please specify if a returnable sample of the proposed voting handset is possible.
3. Provide contact information for at least 3 references, with at least one from a municipal body using a comparable system and support services for comparable purposes.
4. Please outline your availability for local (in-person) and/or remote system demonstration and interviews.
5. Summarize your company's history, key staff, relevant experience with other municipalities, and other information pertaining to your firm's qualifications and capabilities.
6. Explain how your solution differentiates you from other vendors and why we should choose your company

B. Proposal instructions

(these are just content bullet points – these elements will be drafted by or in close consultation with the Purchasing Officer)

- Submission instructions (price and non price versions, certifications, etc)
- Specify the number of nights that are included in the proposal, pricing, and relevant terms and conditions.

- Describe any available credit under a rental agreement toward the purchase of the System, and relevant terms and conditions.
- How to submit questions about the proposal

5. Evaluation Criteria

A. Minimum Qualifications

1. Minimum of 5 years experience providing audience response technology or comparable services
2. Minimum of 2 years providing electronic voting system services to governmental bodies
3. Demonstrated ability to reliably commit adequate, relevant resources to meet the scope of services and requirements in this RFP, as evidenced by the proposal and References inquiries.
4. Vendor will commit to specific town meeting dates of service at the signing of the contract.

B. Comparative Criteria

Responding vendors meeting the minimum requirements will then be evaluated against competing proposals on the following criteria:

1. QUESTION ONE: Compliance with information requested by this RFP and demonstrated understanding of the Town's objectives and needs as evidenced by the content of the proposal.
2. QUESTION TWO: Extent to which the vendor's capabilities and experience, as described in the proposal and verified by the References, demonstrate qualifications and capabilities to provide the services.
3. QUESTION THREE: Degree to which vendor meets or exceeds the stated technical, functional, training, operating and support requirements, as described in the proposal.
4. QUESTION FOUR: The proposed solution's demonstrated "ease of use", efficiency and speed for town meeting members, voting administrator, Moderator, and town IT staff in all aspects of operation, including but not limited to:

- a. Handset operation and voting confirmation feedback
 - b. Projected voting results
 - c. Creating and amending voting Slides
 - d. Re-voting
 - e. Handset replacement by spares
 - f. Conversion of voting report output to formats suitable for website and print reports
5. QUESTION FIVE: Confidence level that vendor can deliver the scope of services and with high reliability and security, as evidenced by the proposal, supporting documentation, inquires to references, vendor interviews, and (if applicable) vendor demonstrations. **(Is this one redundant?)**
6. QUESTION SIX: Degree to which the vendor offer a “competitive edge” that sets it apart from other submissions.